

TAHOE PINES RESTORATION PLANNING

Summary: Staff recommends authorization to accept up to \$200,000 from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to reimburse for costs associated with the planning of the Tahoe Pines Restoration Project.

Location: In the community of Meyers, near the south shore of Lake Tahoe, bounded by U.S. Highway 50 and the Upper Truckee River adjacent to the Meyers U.S. Highway 50 Upper Truckee River Bridge (Attachments 1 and 2).

Fiscal Summary: Reimbursements from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for up to \$200,000 in previously authorized expenditures.

Recommended Action: Adopt Resolution 11-01-02 (Attachment 3).

Background

In 2007, the Board authorized a grant of \$1,180,000 to the California Wildlife Foundation (CWF) as partial funding for the acquisition of the Tahoe Pines Campground property. The Board also authorized the California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) to accept transfer of the property from the CWF to the Conservancy for stream environment zone (SEZ) restoration, public access, and management purposes. The Resources Agency's Proposition 50 Sierra Nevada-Cascade Conservation Grant Program provided the remainder of the necessary acquisition funds of \$3,060,100. The CWF purchased the property and in fall 2007, the property ownership transferred to the Conservancy.

The Conservancy acquired this eight-acre property due to the significant restoration and public access opportunities onsite. Historic land uses resulted in various degraded resource conditions, and the property presents public access opportunities due to its location adjacent to the Upper Truckee River (UTR) at a gateway to the Tahoe Basin. The campground operated from 1936 to 2007, causing several impacts to the site and the UTR channel and floodplain. The 59 campsites located near the banks of the river caused soil compaction and vegetation disturbance, and the campground owners

modified the property several times to address flood damage and the needs of the developed campground use. Flood events in 1983, 1997, and 2005 resulted in substantial erosion of the campground and the river banks as denuded soils and vegetation were incapable of providing sufficient stabilization. Fill and riprap were placed directly on the banks and floodplain of the river several times to maintain the area for camping use. These historical uses and impacts caused accelerated erosion and reduced natural processes such as river-floodplain connectivity. The impaired site conditions contribute to the loss of clarity in Lake Tahoe, and they reduce the quality of onsite and regional wildlife habitat conditions. The Tahoe Pines Restoration Project (Project) aims to address the resource degradation described above while exploring onsite recreational and public access opportunities.

After the Conservancy acquired ownership of the Tahoe Pines property, Conservancy staff initiated resource evaluation work to document property characteristics. Site surveys were performed to establish the land capability and existing land coverage, as well as topography and other site conditions. The Conservancy also contracted for assistance in developing an opportunities and constraints analysis for both restoration and access improvements through the California Department of General Services (DGS). Conceptual restoration and public access improvement plans are being developed concurrently to ensure the most efficient and effective implementation of a project with multiple resource benefits.

Once implemented, this restoration effort will assist in meeting the EIP thresholds of soil conservation, water quality, fisheries, and wildlife habitat within the Upper Truckee River Watershed. The recreation and public access components of the Project will also assist with TRPA threshold attainment for recreation and scenic resources. The exact quantities of threshold contributions will be determined as the project design is developed. Restoration efforts on this property will complement the other UTR watershed projects being planned and implemented by the City of South Lake Tahoe (City), the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU), the Conservancy and California State Parks.

The Project will be implemented under funding authority granted by the Board in July 2007, when the Board authorized the expenditure of \$200,000 to support an assessment of the Upper Truckee Watershed for the SEZ/Watershed Restoration program. In September 2010, the Conservancy entered into an agreement for \$200,000 with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) for the Project using authority granted by the Board to accept up to \$1,162,000 in reimbursements from the BOR for the Upper Truckee Marsh Restoration Planning project, also granted in September 2010. The Conservancy will be entering into the agreement with the BOR for the

Upper Truckee Marsh Restoration Planning project sometime after January 2011. The additional authority requested in this authorization is required to ensure the Upper Truckee Marsh Restoration Planning project has sufficient authority at the time the Conservancy enters into an agreement with the BOR for that project.

Project Description

Staff requests the authority to accept up to \$200,000 in reimbursements from the BOR for Project expenditures. At this time, only \$20,000 has been appropriated for the agreement from the BOR, but it is expected that the full amount of \$200,000 will be obligated by the BOR by the end of 2011. The Conservancy will not expend an amount that surpasses the appropriations in the grant, and therefore there will be no risk of expending Conservancy funds which may not be reimbursed by the BOR.

To date, DGS, Conservancy staff, and a team of consultants have developed opportunities and constraints for potential site improvements. The funding to be reimbursed under this authorization will be used to further these initial efforts, develop preliminary engineering plans, and conduct environmental review required for CEQA, NEPA, and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) compliance.

Completion of this initial planning phase will make the proposed restoration project eligible for future implementation funding from multiple sources. Implementation of the Project will require future Board adoption of environmental findings pursuant to CEQA, and authorization to proceed with implementation from the Board and potentially the State Public Works Board.

Project Budget

Up to \$200,000 will be provided by the BOR to reimburse the Conservancy for costs associated with the Project. Estimated Project costs are shown below. Costs per task may change, but the total amount for all tasks will not exceed \$200,000.

Estimated project costs are summarized as follows:

<u>Task</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Preliminary engineering design	\$100,000
Environmental Surveys	50,000
Conservancy staff time	<u>50,000</u>
TOTAL	\$200,000

As explained earlier in this staff report, funding for the efforts associated with this Project were previously authorized by the Board in July 2007.

Project Implementation

In accordance with state requirements, the Project will be administered through the DGS, Professional Services Branch. In addition, staff from BOR, T R P A, and other agencies as well as technical experts will provide input during project planning as part of a Technical Advisory Group.

If authorized, the Conservancy will accept funds from the BOR for reimbursement of planning expenses. If authorized, the Conservancy and DGS will prepare a contract with tasks necessary to conduct resource surveys needed for environmental review and develop preliminary engineering plans. The Conservancy and DGS will select a contractor through a competitive process.

Consistency with the Conservancy's Enabling Legislation

Implementation of this project is consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation. Specifically, Government Code section 66908 authorizes the Conservancy to receive reimbursements and other funds from public agencies. Government Code section 66907.10 authorizes the Conservancy to improve and develop acquired lands for a variety of purposes, including protection of the natural environment. Under Government Code section 66906.8, the Conservancy is authorized to select and hire private consultants or contractors to achieve these purposes.

Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., title 14, § 15000 et seq.), certain classes of activities are statutorily exempt from CEQA or are exempt because they have been determined by the Secretary for Resources to have no significant effect on the environment. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21082, the Conservancy has also adopted regulations to implement, interpret, and make specific, the provisions of CEQA. Cal. Code Regs., title 14, § 12100 et seq. Staff has evaluated this project, and has found it to be exempt under CEQA. This project qualifies for a categorical exemption under State CEQA Guidelines, section 15306 (information collection) and for a statutory exemption under section 15262 (feasibility and planning studies). A Notice of Exemption (NOE) has been drafted for the project (Attachment 4). If the Board approves the project, staff will file the NOE with the State Clearinghouse pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines, section 15062.

List of Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Project Location Map

Attachment 2 – Project Site Map

Attachment 3 – Resolution 11-01-02

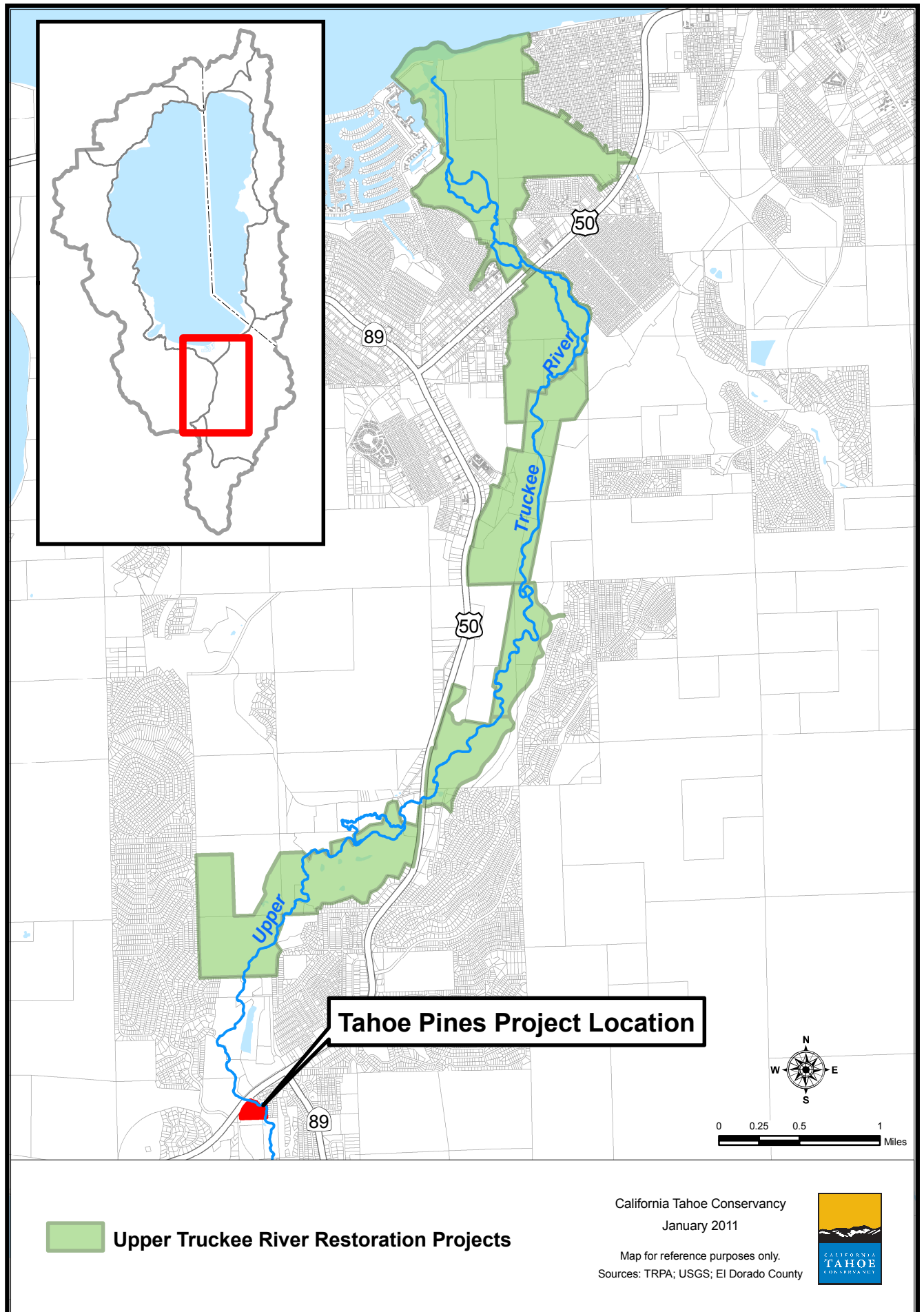
Attachment 4 – Notice of Exemption

Conservancy Staff Contact:

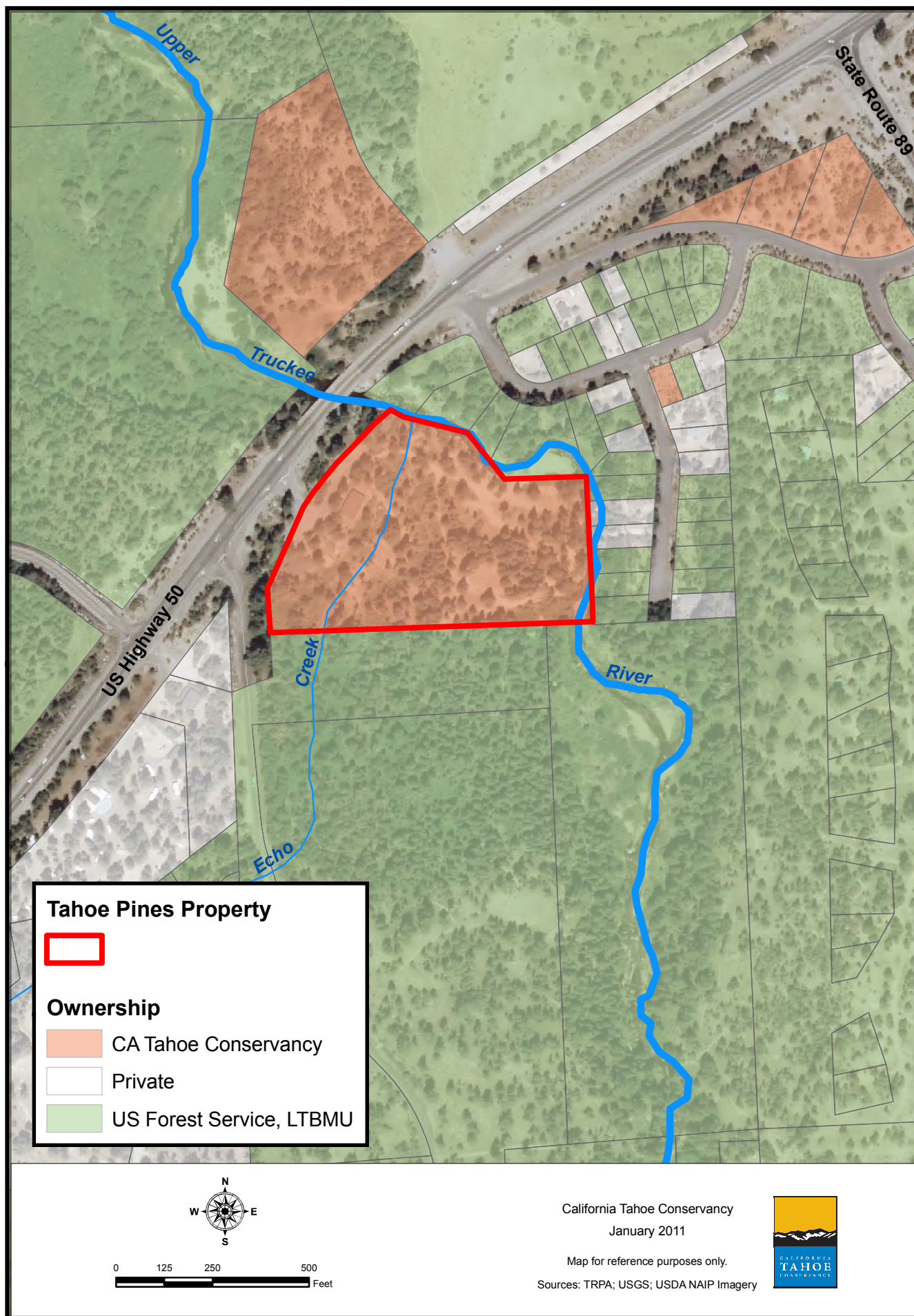
Stuart Roll

Phone: (530) 543-6031

ATTACHMENT 1
Tahoe Pines Restoration Project



ATTACHMENT 2
Tahoe Pines Site Map



ATTACHMENT 3

California Tahoe Conservancy

Resolution

11-01-02

Adopted: January 20, 2011

TAHOE PINES RESTORATION PROJECT

Staff recommends the California Tahoe Conservancy make the following finding based on the accompanying staff report pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.:

"The California Tahoe Conservancy has evaluated the proposed Tahoe Pines Restoration Project and has determined it to be categorically and statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act. The Conservancy hereby directs staff to file a Notice of Exemption for this Project with the State Clearinghouse."

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Government Code sections 66906.8, 66907.10, and 66908:

"The California Tahoe Conservancy hereby authorizes staff to accept up to \$200,000 for the Tahoe Pines Restoration Project from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to conduct planning activities, and to take all other necessary steps in substantial conformity with the accompanying staff report."

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the resolution duly and regularly adopted by the California Tahoe Conservancy at a meeting thereof held on the 20th day of January 2011.

In WITNESS THEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 20th day of January 2011.

Patrick Wright
Executive Director

ATTACHMENT 4

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

TO: Office of Planning and Research
1400 10th Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

FROM: California Tahoe Conservancy
1061 Third Street
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

Project Title:

Tahoe Pines Restoration Project

Project Location – Specific:

In the community of Meyers, near the south shore of Lake Tahoe, bounded by U.S. Highway 50 and the Upper Truckee River (UTR), adjacent to the Meyers U.S. Highway 50 Upper Truckee River Bridge (Attachments 1 and 2)

Project Location – City:

Unincorporated Area

Project Location – County:

El Dorado

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project consists of planning, environmental, and preliminary design work for a restoration project along the Upper Truckee River. The project also includes reimbursement by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for funds expended by the Conservancy in conducting the project planning activities.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project:

California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy meeting of 1/20/2011) (Agenda Item 7b)

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:

California Tahoe Conservancy

Exempt Status:

- ☐ Ministerial (§ 21080 (b)(1); § 15268)
- ☐ Declared Emergency (§ 21080 (b)(3); § 15269 (a))
- ☐ Emergency Project (§ 21080 (b)(4); § 15269 (b)(c))
- ☒ Categorical Exemption (§§ 15306) and Statutory Exemption (§ 15262)

Reasons Why Project is Exempt:

Project involves only information collection, planning, and acceptance of funds in order to further planning efforts.

Contact Person:

Stuart Roll

Telephone Number:

(530) 543-6031

Date Received for Filing:

Patrick Wright
Executive Director